
Name of Organization: Ozaukee Washington Land Trust, Inc.

Type of Organization: Other

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Project Title: Huiras Lake Natural Area Preservation Project

Project Category: Habitat (Ecological) Protection and Rest

Rank by Organization (if applicable): 0

Total Funding Requested (\$): 150,000 **Project Duration:** 1 Years

Abstract:

Although conifer swamps and bogs are abundant in northern Wisconsin, they were never common in southern Wisconsin. In fact, undisturbed examples of these wetlands are now extremely rare due to farming and logging activities over the past 150 years. A rare exception is the Huiras Lake Natural Area.

The Ozaukee Washington Land Trust (OWLT) proposes to protect the Huiras Lake Natural Area, one of the most important and pristine wetland systems remaining in southeast Wisconsin. To date, the OWLT has protected 103 acres within the natural area. The OWLT's end goals are to protect the natural area's 2000 acre drainage basin and restore all wetlands that are currently farmed.

The Huiras Lake Natural Area is located in one of the fastest growing regions in Wisconsin. With almost all of the lands within and around the natural area being privately held, there is a high potential for development and degradation of the site's ecological values. Additionally, recent changes to Wisconsin's septic system code allowing development on marginal lands will place even greater growth pressure on the Huiras Lake Natural Area.

This project will protect 140 acres adjacent to the currently preserved acreage. At least 18 of the plant species categorized as extremely uncommon in southeastern Wisconsin have been found on the site. The project will also protect a majority of the southern shoreline of Huiras Lake, a 26 acre hardwater seepage lake important for nesting and migrating waterfowl.

Geographic Areas Affected by the Project

States:

<input type="checkbox"/> Illinois	<input type="checkbox"/> New York
<input type="checkbox"/> Indiana	<input type="checkbox"/> Pennsylvania
<input type="checkbox"/> Michigan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wisconsin
<input type="checkbox"/> Minnesota	<input type="checkbox"/> Ohio

Lakes:

<input type="checkbox"/> Superior	<input type="checkbox"/> Erie
<input type="checkbox"/> Huron	<input type="checkbox"/> Ontario
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michigan	<input type="checkbox"/> All Lakes

Geographic Initiatives:

<input type="checkbox"/> Greater Chicago	<input type="checkbox"/> NE Ohio	<input type="checkbox"/> NW Indiana	<input type="checkbox"/> SE Michigan	<input type="checkbox"/> Lake St. Clair
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Primary Affected Area of Concern: Not Applicable

Other Affected Areas of Concern:

For Habitat Projects Only:

Primary Affected Biodiversity Investment Area: Not Applicable

Other Affected Biodiversity Investment Areas:

Problem Statement:

The Huiras Lake Natural Area is a 450 acre wetland and upland forested area within the Milwaukee River Basin drainage containing relatively undisturbed examples of several wetland and upland forest types. The natural area also contains a pristine, shallow, hardwater seepage lake with an undeveloped shoreline, which is extremely valuable waterfowl and wildlife habitat.

Although portions of the upland and wetland forest have been logged in the past, there has been no recent disturbance to the natural area. Additionally, the forest has not been adversely impacted by development. The natural area is very unusual in that it has not been colonized by the invasive exotics which plague most similar natural areas in southeastern Wisconsin. For example, none of the troublesome exotic shrubs (honeysuckle, common buckthorn or glossy buckthorn) have been found in surveys of the flora of the area. The lack of recent disturbance combined with the near absence of introduced or exotic plants render the Huiras Lake Natural Area perhaps the most "pristine" wetland area in southeastern Wisconsin.

In addition to being a high quality natural area because of lack of disturbance, the plant communities of the Huiras Lake natural area are very unusual for the southeastern Wisconsin region. The wetland communities are excellent examples of vegetation typical of northern Wisconsin, but are very uncommon in the southern part of the state.

Although no listed endangered or threatened plants have been found in the cursory surveys of the flora conducted to date, at least 18 species categorized by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) as extremely uncommon in southeast Wisconsin (over 16 % of the 109 recorded species) are found in the natural area. While over 16% of the known flora is considered uncommon, an even greater proportion of the flora (25 species, or 23% of the recorded flora) are clearly northern plants having ranges which do not extend far south of the Huiras Lake Natural Area.

A few examples of these regionally uncommon species found in the bog and cedar-tamarack conifer swamp of the site include blue bead lily (*Clintonia borealis*) a plant very abundant and typical in wetlands in the far north, but extremely uncommon this far south; members of the blueberry family such as leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*), huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), velvet-leaf blueberry (*Vaccinium myrtilloides*), and small cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), each found in only one or two other locations in Ozaukee County; and the insectivorous pitcher plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*) and round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*). Another excellent example of a very common Wisconsin plant which is unusual in these wetlands is white pine (*Pinus strobus*); the Huiras Lake natural area population of white pine may be the southernmost natural population of white pine in Wisconsin.

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission has recognized the importance of the Huiras Lake Natural

Area by categorizing it as a ecological site of statewide significance. In order to fully protect the natural area, the OWLT has identified the entire Huiras Lake watershed of approximately 2000 acres as a priority for preservation.

The OWLT proposesto use the GLNPO grant to protect two tracts of land within the Huiras Lake Natural Area, totaling 140 acres. Both sites are adjacent to its current holding. The parcels known as the Dix property and Rainbow Day Camp make up two of the largest and most important properties within the natural area. These properties contain many significant natural resource features including:

- **30 acres of conifer swamp comprised of tamarack, paper birch and white cedar;
- **30 acres of hardwood swamp made up of red maple and green ash;
- **40 acres of upland forest comprised of sugar maple, red oak, American beech and a native stand of white pine which is believed to be tthe southern most natural stand of white pine in Wisconsin;
- ** a small bog lake with an undeveloped shoreline, providing important habitat for amphibians and waterfowl;
- **10 acres of wet meadow and cattail marsh; and
- **30 acres of grassland providing habitat for upland game birds and other wildlife.

Protecting the Huiras Lake Natural Area is not only good for the Milwaukee River Basin but for Lake Michigan as well by meeting LAMP habitat protection goals.

Proposed Work Outcome:

The OWLT will purchase conservation easements on the Dix and Rainbow Day Camp properties. These easements will help meet the long term goal of preserving and restoring the natural area qualities of the Huiras lake Natural Area for the purposes of preserving and enhancing wildlife habitat and water quality and maintaining the viability of important and rare wetland systems.

Both easements will be perpetual and include provisions prohibiting development and all other uses that could degrade or destory the natural area. The Rainbow Day Camp is a youth camp owned by the Milwaukee Jewish Federation. The federation intends to maintain ownership of the site for the foreseeable future. The conservation easement will allow the day camp to continue operation and use the property for educational and passive recreational activities. The Dix family will continue ownership of their property, but discussions are underway to plan for the transfer of the site to the OWLT upon the deaths of Mr. & Mrs. Dix.

Vegetation surveys and other biological assessments will be accomplished on these properties. Wetland restorations and habitat improvements will be conducted as well.

Project Milestones:

Dates:

Project Start	10/2000
Prepare and review easement agreements	12/2000
Finalize assessments and appraisals	04/2001
Complete easement purchases	06/2001
Prepare management plans for the sites	09/2001
Submit final report to GLNPO	10/2001
Project End	10/2001
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☐ Project Addresses Environmental Justice

If So, Description of How:

☒ Project Addresses Education/Outreach

If So, Description of How:

The Huiras Lake Natural Area will provide opportunities for educating the general public, school and interest groups about this unique and valuable ecosystem at a site unparalleled in southeast Wisconsin. Over the long term, hiking trails and other passive recreation opportunities will be made available in portions of the natural area.

Project Budget:

	Federal Share Requested (\$)	Applicant's Share (\$)
Personnel:	0	5,000
Fringe:	0	450
Travel:	0	50
Equipment:	0	0
Supplies:	0	0
Contracts:	0	6,000
Construction:	0	0
Other:	150,000	0
Total Direct Costs:	150,000	11,500
Indirect Costs:	0	0
Total:	150,000	11,500
Projected Income:	0	0

Funding by Other Organizations (Names, Amounts, Description of Commitments):

The Ozaukee County Land Conservation Department will provide technical assistance regarding wetland restoration and wildlife habitat enhancement (valued at \$2,500).

The University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Field Station staff will conduct vegetation surveys and other biological assessments (valued at \$4,000).

Ducks Unlimited will be asked to provide \$2,500 worth of financial assistance with respect to wetland restoration and habitat improvements. DU has verbally committed to assisting with these activities.

Description of Collaboration/Community Based Support:

The Ozaukee Washington Land Trust is a private, non-profit 501c(3) organization dedicated to the preservation of natural areas and open spaces in Ozaukee and Washington Counties, located in southeastern Wisconsin. Formed in 1992 by a group of concerned residents, the Land Trust works with private landowners and communities to preserve and protect the natural character and ecological diversity of the two-county area using a variety of tools such as conservation easements, land acquisition, property donations and land registry.

To date, more than 600 acres of forests, wetlands and wildlife habitat have been preserved by the OWLT. The organization is governed by a 23 member board of directors. Membership is open to the public and numbers about 600. Funding is provided through membership dues and contributions from individuals, corporations and foundations.

The OWLT is widely respected and acknowledged for its conservation work. It has directed and accomplished numerous land preservation projects, including the acquisition and protection of a 103 acre parcel within the Huiras Lake Natural Area. Financial partners in this project included the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Ducks Unlimited, Wings over Wisconsin-Ozaukee Chapter, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and many local foundations and businesses. Additionally, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Field Station and Ozaukee County Land Conservation Department provided technical assistance throughout the project. These agencies and organizations as well as the Wisconsin Chapter of the Nature Conservancy are committed to supporting additional work within the Huiras Lake Natural Area.